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NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CCCCXVI.

JULY, 1891.

MY VIEWS ON PHILANTHROPY.

BY THE BARON DE HIRSCH.

I HAVE followed with lively interest the series of articles on the "Obligations of Wealth," which have appeared in the well-known NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, and although I am more a man of deeds than of word or pen, I am quite ready to answer, so far as practicable, the question asked me as to "what motives have led me into my philanthropic work."

Do not expect me to enter into a theoretical discussion similar to those carried on by the able men who have developed in these pages a philosophical system regarding the duty of the possessor of riches ; but allow me to set forth in a few words the practical method I have determined upon for carrying out my philanthropic ideas.

In regard to this there is, in my opinion, no possibility for doubt that the possession of great wealth lays a duty upon the possessor. It is my inmost conviction that I must consider myself as only the temporary administrator of the wealth I have amassed, and that it is my duty to contribute in my own way to the relief of the suffering of those who are hard pressed by fate. I contend most decidedly against the old system of alms-giving, which only makes so many more beggars ; and I consider it the greatest problem in philanthropy to make human beings who are capable of work out of individuals who otherwise must become paupers, and in this way to create useful members of society.

Philanthropy in its proper sense has, no doubt, a higher purpose, and can find its best field for action in the creation of free

libraries, green parks, beautiful churches, etc. This is Mr. Carnegie's idea, which he has practically demonstrated again and again. Certainly these are ideal objects, which tend to bring about universal happiness ; and lucky are they who live in lands where the absolute necessities of life are so well supplied that, I might almost say, one sees that the obligation of riches and the purposes of philanthropy are fulfilled in supplying the necessity of æsthetic pleasures. In relieving human suffering I never ask whether the cry of necessity comes from a being who belongs to my own faith or not ; but what is more natural than that I should find my highest purpose in bringing to the followers of Judaism, who have been oppressed for a thousand years, who are starving in misery, the possibility of a physical and moral regeneration ?—than that I should try to free them, to build them up into capable citizens, and thus furnish humanity with much new and valuable material ? Every page in the history of the Jews teaches us that in thinking this I am following no Utopian theory, and I am confident that such a result can be attained.

For it does not matter how low the disciples of the faith may have fallen, nor how crushed they may seem to be ; it only needs a single breath of freedom to bring honor and stimulus to the country to which they belong. The middle ages and modern times alike prove this. It is not necessary for me to cite examples, since the famous men who have raised themselves out of the Jewish race are well enough known, and since it cannot be the object of these lines to sing the praises of the Jews or the high spiritual qualities of their people. I will therefore keep myself to the question that has been put to me to answer—What results are to follow from my philanthropic labors ?

What I desire to accomplish, what, after many failures, has come to be the object of my life, and that for which I am ready to stake my wealth and my intellectual powers, is to give to a portion of my companions in faith the possibility of finding a new existence, primarily as farmers, and also as handicraftsmen, in those lands where the laws and religious tolerance permit them to carry on the struggle for existence as noble and responsible subjects of a humane government.

It has become a maxim and a typical reproach against the Jews that they have no inclination for agriculture or manual labor. That is an error which is contradicted not only by modern

examples, but by history. The Israelites in the time of Christ were agriculturists *par excellence*, while trade, which, judging from the practice of the Jews of to-day, should be the inheritance of Israel, lay then entirely in the hands of the Phœnicians, the Greeks, and the people of the Mediterranean states. The Jews, as long as they were politically independent, cared for their fields, as I have said. They drove their herds, and were handicraftsmen. The tendency towards work in the fields and in the shop existed, therefore, and my own observations and those of others have proved that it is quite possible to reawaken in the race this capacity and love for agriculture, and to bring it into existence again. Of his own power, therefore, the poor Jew, who until now has been hated as an outcast, will win for himself peace and independence, love for the ground he tills and for freedom ; and he will become a patriotic citizen of his new home.

Guided by these convictions, my course for philanthropic work was clearly shown me. By establishing organizations in the Orient and in Galicia I wished to give the Jews who had remained in the faith the opportunity of becoming good farmers and craftsmen, without removing them from the land upon which they were settled, and agricultural schools and schools for manual training were to supply the means for teaching them.

It is necessary, however, to adopt some other method for aiding those Jews who are driven from their country, and are obliged to seek new homes across the ocean. And it is at present, therefore, my greatest desire to accomplish a work on a much more important scale, and of quite a different character from any adopted up to the present time—a purpose which, it may be reasonably hoped, will bring about the results already mentioned. The question is, then, to help the Russian Jews who have just been exiled from their homes to find new countries where they can use their powers freely, where they can bring into practice again the qualities they have inherited from their ancestors, and, finally, where they can become useful citizens of a free and secure country in which the rights of all inhabitants are equal.

In considering this plan, I naturally thought of the United States, where the liberal constitution is a guarantee of happy development for the followers of all religious faiths. Yet I was obliged to confess that to increase to any great extent the already enormous number of Jews in the United States would

be of advantage neither to the country itself nor to the exiled Jews ; for it is my firm conviction that this new settlement should be scattered through different lands and spread over a large space, so that there shall be no opportunity for social or religious rupture. I made a study, therefore, of different countries, and after careful examination I have become convinced that the Argentine Republic, Canada, and Australia, above all others, offer the surest guarantee for the accomplishment of the plan. I expect to begin with the Argentine Republic, and arrangements for the purchase of certain lands for the settlement are now being made.

I do not undertake the execution of so weighty a work without much preparatory study as to whether the Jewish race has or has not an inclination towards agriculture. The following example will go far to silence any doubt in this direction and to prove the capacity of the Jews for farming and colonization.

Some years ago several hundred Jewish families were exiled from Russia to the Argentine. In spite of untold suffering, in spite of the greatest hindrances which they encountered, they succeeded in taking root in their new homes. These same families, which a few years ago, bending under heavy burdens, appeared to be only wandering trades-people in Russia, have now become thrifty farmers, who with plough and hoe know how to farm as well as if they had never done anything else. They lay out their farms in the best manner, and build themselves such pretty little houses that every one in the vicinity employs them as carpenters in housebuilding.

The knowledge of this guides me in my work, and I am now setting out with all my strength to accomplish it.

This is, in a few words, the idea which leads me in my philanthropic work—the motive that lies at the bottom of the plan. The working of a huge cosmopolitan scheme would scatter my strength broadcast. If I devote myself, however, to this one work, I can perhaps bring it to eventual accomplishment. And all through the matter I have the certainty that he who frees thousands of his fellow-men from suffering and an oppressed existence, and helps them to become useful citizens, does a good work for all humanity.

M. DE HIRSCH.